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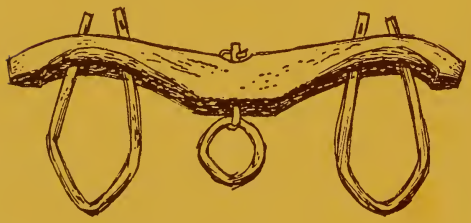

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A ROW-PETERSON PLAY

WHEN ABE LINCOLN KEPT STORE

Price, 35 Cents

BRANSON BLAKE

TREASURE HUNT

AND FOUR OTHER ONE-ACT PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By MARY THURMAN PYLE

Author of *The Ring and the Look, All the Rivers, Shelby and Sons,* and other plays

CONTENTS

● **TREASURE HUNT.** 10 W. Four girls engage in a treasure hunt, but for *human* treasure. Each brings home a "town character," thereby giving rise to complications of the most unexpected kind. An admirable play for a girls' cast.

● **PEARLS AND GOLD.** 4 M. 3 W. Eddie Maxwell and his pal, "Monk" Williamson, indulge in a game of make-believe, pretending to be serious about recovering hidden treasure in an old cabin. The unexpected entrance of an eccentric old man makes a *real* experience of it.

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ROW, PETERSON & COMPANY

Evanston, Illinois

131 E. 23rd St., New York City : 159 New Montgomery St., San Francisco

When Abe Lincoln Kept Store

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By

BRANSON BLAKE

First Produced at the Hine Junior High School,
Washington, D. C,

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ROW, PETERSON & COMPANY

Evanston, Illinois

131 E. 23rd Street
New York City

159 New Montgomery Street
San Francisco

CHARACTERS

CHARLIE SUMMERS, *about twenty-one, a good-looking farm lad*

FRED SUMMERS, *Charlie's younger brother*

ZIP JOHNSON, *an idler and dreamer*

CAROLINE, *a serious young woman of New Salem*

NELLY, *her coquettish and irresponsible little sister*

ABE LINCOLN, *store-keeper and postmaster*

OLD MOSE, *colored servant*

AUNT HATTY, *a stern spinster, aunt of Caroline and Nelly*

SCENE: *A plain country store in New Salem, Illinois*

TIME: *The autumn of* 1833

1972

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When Abe Lincoln Kept Store

The action of the play takes place in the old General Store and Post Office of New Salem, Illinois, in 1833. *There is a low store counter paralleling the cyclorama curtain, or background, and about four feet from it if the stage is of average proportions. The counter can be made of small tables, boxes, or desks masked with brown paper or burlap. On the counter is an old wooden bucket and dipper at L., some grocery scales at R., and a lantern, some old books, a flour scoop, bags of groceries, and some apples, jars of fruit, and a white apron for the store keeper. There is a keg and a cider jug on the floor at L. There is an old chair in front of the counter near the bucket. At R. is an old-fashioned stove with a long pipe which extends through the wall at back. At far R. is a large chair. A wooden box is near the stove. Boxes and kegs are strewn around for atmosphere. Over the counter is hung a crude sign,* General Store and Post Office.

At rise of curtain CHARLIE *is seated in the chair at R., whittling slowly.* FRED, *sitting on the keg, L., is softly playing Stephen Foster's "Gentle Annie" on his harmonica.* ZIP, *his hat over his face, is asleep in the chair in front of the counter.* ZIP'S *legs are stretched out, his hands hang limp, his left hand almost on the floor.* FRED *finishes his tune, and* CHARLIE *speaks.*

CHARLIE. (*With a drawl, as he whittles.*) That's the tune old Luke was playin' down at the barn dance the evenin'

Nelly told me she weren't goin' to marry me. Sure makes me sad to hear it. I ain't heard nothin' to excel it exactly since Abe Lincoln played for the youngsters over at the school house the day the teacher was took sick.

FRED. (*With some heat.*) Now, listen here, Charlie Summers, I can play this here French harp as good as Abe Lincoln. I can play just as good as any man in Illinois.

CHARLIE. (*Slowly, still whittling.*) Yes, I reckon so—as good as any ordinary man. But Abe Lincoln ain't just what the dictionary feller there (*pointing to a book on the counter*) had in mind when he set down in black and white the meanin' o' them words "ordinary man." I sorta think the Lord gets mighty tired of ordinary men, and every hundred years or so He tries His almighty hand at somethin' special.

FRED. (*With a sneer.*) I reckon you mean the Lord gets tired o' listenin' to fellers like me, and creates Abe Lincoln so He can hear some real good music rendered on the French harp here below.

(*He toots his harmonica gaily.* CHARLIE *stops his whittling.*)

CHARLIE. (*Loudly.*) That ain't funny a'tall, Fred. And I don't like to hear you talkin' about Abe as if he was jest like every kind o' common folk down on your level.

FRED. (*As he stops playing, in the middle of a phrase.*) Well, ain't he down on my level . . . and your level . . . and everybody's level?

CHARLIE. (*Again whittling thoughtfully.*) I s'pose he is, Fred. He ain't proud. He's down on our level, all right, the common folks' level. . . . Maybe that's what makes him so far above us all.

(FRED *looks at* CHARLIE, *puzzled, scratches the back of his neck with his left hand, then brightens suddenly.*)

FRED. He has got awful long legs!

(*He thinks this remark clever, and begins to play loudly.* CHARLIE *stops whittling and looks up at him.*)

CHARLIE. Cut out that dang-busted racket, will you!

(FRED *stops.* ZIP *stirs in his sleep and moans a little.*)

Abe Lincoln ain't tall jest in body only. He's a tall soul. He's got his boots deep in the mud o' New Salem, Illinois, this little no-account corner of no place; but he's got his head in the stars somewheres.

(ZIP *cries out as if waking from a terrible nightmare, scrambles to his feet, clings to the counter, breathing very hard.*)

What in the name of heaven has gone and got into you, Zip Johnson, you good-for-nothin' loafer?

(CHARLIE *rises.*)

FRED. (*Indifferently.*) Did a rat bite you or somethin'?

(*He takes a sip from the cider jug.*)

ZIP. (*Moving unsteadily downstage C. as he speaks.*) I reckon I was a-dreamin'. . . . I thought I seen a great black cloud that nigh covered the whole earth. (*His voice strange, mystical.*) It was like dust before the wind when a storm is comin' 'cross the fields, with the mournful sound of lost souls cryin' in the windy corn!

(*His voice rises; his eyes stare wildly.*)

CHARLIE. (*Remaining motionless.*) You're talkin' crazy, Zip!

(FRED, *holding his jug tightly, rises and places himself behind the keg where he has been sitting.*)

ZIP. (*His voice shrill.*) I saw a thousand men a-marchin'

forth to battle. There was flags flyin' and drums rollin' like thunder. A thousand voices were singin' "John Brown's body lies a-mouldin' in the grave . . . John Brown's body. . . ."

CHARLIE. Shut up, Zip! Shut up before I break somethin' over that numbskull head of yours and bring you back to sense and reason!

(*He reaches for a stick of wood in the box near the stove.*)

ZIP. (*His voice lower.*) It was dark until the clouds broke and the stars came out everywhere so bright I was almost blinded with all their burnin' brightness. And I seen a strange man a-loomin' in the light with his head bowed down and tears a-streamin' down his face for all the sorrows of the world. . . . I seen him, Charlie! Then he was gone, and the sky got awful red. It was red . . . like blood!

(*The last word is drawn out with eerie emphasis.*)

CHARLIE. The boy's out of his head. Get him some water, will you?

(*He drops the stick of wood and starts toward* ZIP, *but pauses as* CAROLINE *and* NELLY *enter L.*)

CAROLINE. (*Laughing.*) Poor Abe! I knew he'd simply have to stop and fetch that little pig out of the mud!

(*She pauses at L., looking at* ZIP.)

NELLY. (*Indifferently.*) I couldn't tell which one was the pig.

(*Ignoring* ZIP, *she sees* CHARLIE *and crosses toward him, pouting slightly, her chin high.*)

CAROLINE. Why, Zip, whatever is the matter with you? You're wide awake . . . and looking so strangely.

(*She sets her basket on the counter and approaches* ZIP.)

FRED. (*Sitting down and replacing his jug beside him.*) Aw, he's slightly teched in the head, I reckon. Been sleepin'

by the molasses barrel and dreamin' 'bout a battle in the clouds and somebody walkin' 'mong the stars, or somethin'.

(CAROLINE *places her hand gently on* ZIP'S *left shoulder.*)

CHARLIE. (*Happily.*) Howdy, Nell. I'm sure glad to see you!

(NELLY *looks away, not returning his greeting.* CAROLINE *gets a dipper of water from the bucket on the counter.*)

CAROLINE. Here, Zip. Drink this, and come sit down. You'll be all right in a minute.

(ZIP *drinks a little and returns the dipper to* CAROLINE, *who replaces it in the bucket.*)

ZIP. Thank you, ma'am. (*A bit unsteadily.*) I reckon I'll sit here awhile and rest myself.

(*He sits on the floor D.L. where he remains until his concluding line at the end of the play.* CAROLINE, *looks kindly at* ZIP, *goes to the counter and removes her bonnet, then appears to be searching for something in her pocket and basket.* FRED, *looking wisely toward* CHARLIE *and* NELLY, *begins to play "Gentle Annie."* CAROLINE *may remove some of the eggs from the basket, then replace them, searching for her grocery list.*)

CHARLIE. (*Sadly, whittling.*) I kinda thought you wouldn't speak to me, Nell, after I acted up the way I did about you goin' to marry Slim Judkins 'stead of me.

NELLY. (*Brightening and looking at him slyly.*) Are you *jealous*, Charlie?

(*She moves her shoulders slightly, playfully.*)

CHARLIE. No, I ain't exactly jealous.

NELLY. (*Stiffening.*) Oh, so you're *not* jealous?

CHARLIE. No, I got my work to do. I reckon I'll get over it. Abe says that when a feller——

NELLY. Maybe some other girl, some other *pretty* girl, will come along one of these days; and you'll be telling her the same sweet little things you used to tell me.

CHARLIE. Maybe I will; maybe I won't.

NELLY. (*Irritated.*) Oh, you men! You are all cut of the same cloth!

(*She turns away from* CHARLIE, *L., and stamps her foot.* FRED *stops playing.* CAROLINE *turns toward the audience, looks at* ZIP, *then at* NELLY.)

CAROLINE. Where is that grocery list Aunt Hatty gave us, Nell? Zip certainly frightened all the corn meal and molasses out of my mind.

ZIP. I'm sorry, ma'am.

CAROLINE. Do you suppose we could have——

NELLY. Oh, let me alone! I don't know where it is!

CAROLINE. Why, Nell! What on earth has got into everybody today? Abe Lincoln is the only one I've seen who's acting perfectly natural. (*Laughing.*) And he's doing the same old silly things! Do you know what we saw him doing down the road a little while ago, Charlie?

CHARLIE. No, ma'am. I thought Abe was down to old Mr. Mathison's cabin tendin' the sick. We was keepin' store till he gets back.

NELLY. (*Crossly.*) If you must know, your hero was down in a muddy ditch giving aid and succor to a filthy little pig.

CAROLINE. He was saving the little pig's life. He might have drowned.

CHARLIE. (*Smiling.*) That's jest like Abe, all right. Did he say anything 'bout old Mr. Mathison? He's took sick with a bad cold. It might be "pemonia," Abe said. He went over

there to make him comfortable and take care of him for a while.

FRED. That old man ain't sick! He's been known to complain of every ailment known to the human family.

(*He drinks from the jug.*)

CHARLIE. (*Going behind the counter.*) That ain't so, Fred Summers.

(CAROLINE *turns around to face* CHARLIE.)

Abe Lincoln wouldn't have walked three miles jest to look after a misery in Mr. Mathison's big toe. Is there somethin' I can get for you in the way of groceries, Miss Caroline?

NELLY. (*Sitting in the chair at R.*) You needn't bother! We'll wait for Mr. Lincoln.

CAROLINE. Nell! You know Charlie would cut off his right arm for you, and you go on treating him as mean as you can. You've treated him badly enough already, I *think*.

NELLY. I don't care! I'm in love with Slim Judkins, and I'm going to marry him as soon as he gets back from New Orleans.

(FRED *begins softly to play "America."*)

CAROLINE. (*Turned toward the audience, as she looks off L.*) Abe Lincoln!

(ABE *enters L. slowly, removing his battered hat with his right hand. His clothes are badly soiled and muddy. He stands still for several seconds.*)

Tell us, Abe, how is the little pig . . . and Mr. Mathison?

(FRED *plays his harmonica until* CAROLINE *says her last word. There is a moment of silence before* ABE *speaks. All except* NELLY *look at him.*)

ABE. The Lord spared the pig, Miss Caroline.

CAROLINE. Do you mean that . . .

ABE. Yes. Mr. Mathison has pulled up stakes in Illinois. (*Going behind the counter, removing his coat.*) I reckon he's on his way now to a new clearing in the wilderness.

CHARLIE. Where'd that be, Abe?

(*Whittling again, he moves R.*)

ABE. They call it heaven in the dictionary, Charlie.

(*He puts on his apron and sets the counter in order.*)

CAROLINE. Oh, I'm so sorry. Poor old Mr. Mathison.

(*She sits in the chair formerly occupied by* ZIP.)

ABE. Well, we all have to move on some time or other; but when we do, we'll have at least one thing to be thankful for.

(*He starts counting the eggs in* CAROLINE'S *basket.*)

FRED. (*Dubiously.*) What do you mean, thankful for?

ABE. (*Glancing toward* CHARLIE *and* NELLY.) Well, death and a broken heart are pretty bad things, but they're final things, and they don't come back like the tax collector to pester a fellow again and again.

(*He is still counting eggs.*)

CAROLINE. (*Quietly.*) How did Mr. Mathison die, Abe? Was he suffering very much?

NELLY. (*Ignoring* CHARLIE, *as he moves toward her.*) I've heard that when people die, they make long death-bed speeches and say great things that you read about in books.

ZIP. Can a man see into the future when he's a-dyin', Abe? Can he?

ABE. I don't know, Zip. People usually just pass on quietly without saying anything oratorical. They might just say, "What time is it?" or "Is it still raining?"

(*He finishes with the eggs and looks up.*)

CAROLINE. (*Rising.*) Was it two dozen, Abe? Old Mose counted them for me.

ABE. (*Smiling.*) Old Mose, I guess, ma'am, doesn't know his arithmetic any better than most folks know their grammar. They total two dozen and three. (*Replacing the three eggs in the basket.*) These belong to you.

CAROLINE. Abe Lincoln, you're the honestest man in New Salem.

ABE. Thank you, ma'am. Honesty, I figure, is, after all, the easiest policy. It takes a heap of thinking and planning to be dishonest . . . successfully. (CAROLINE *laughs.*) Could I get you some more of that tea?

(*He does so.*)

CAROLINE. That's it. Tea. (*Turning to* NELLY.) Where could we have put that list, Nell?

NELLY. (*Crossly.*) Oh, I lost it.

CAROLINE. (*Trying to recollect.*) I can't seem to remember all the things Aunt Hatty wanted. I always did have a hard time remembering the things I was supposed to remember.

ABE. (*Scooping the tea out of a container into a small sack.*) I've always had the same trouble, Miss Caroline. (*Weighing the tea.*) And I believe I'll remember forever the things I'd like to forget. How about flour?

CHARLIE. Is that true, Abe? Can't a man ever forget the girl he loved . . . (*glancing at* NELLY) and lost . . . to a better man?

NELLY. What on earth are you talking about, Charlie Summers?

CAROLINE. Yes, Abe. Five pounds of flour . . . (*doubtfully*) I think.

ABE. I reckon not, Charlie. It don't look that way, at present. I was in love once. (*He pauses thoughtfully for a moment.*) Five pounds of flour.

(*He starts to weigh the flour.* NELLY *looks first at* ABE, *then at* CHARLIE, *then rises suddenly.*)

NELLY. I'm going home. I simply can't stay here and listen to this silly kind of talk!

(*She starts briskly L.*)

ABE. (*Pausing in his work.*) Oh, just a minute, Miss Nelly!

(NELLY *stops at L.C. and turns.*)
I believe I've got a letter here for you. (*Wiping his hands on his apron.*) Almost forgot it. I'll be losing my job if I don't do better than that.

(*He picks up the letter and looks at the handwriting.*)

NELLY. (*Going toward him, holding out her hand.*) Abe Lincoln, you certainly will lose your job when I report this to—to—the proper authorities! Give it to me!

ABE. Pretty poor penmanship. Postmarked New Orleans.

NELLY. New Orleans! Why, Slim's in New Orleans! Give me that letter, Abe Lincoln.

(*She rushes around behind the counter.* FRED *clutches his hat as she almost carries it off. She takes the letter from* ABE, *turns and starts back L., trips over* FRED'S *jug, and nearly falls.*)
Fred Summers, you make me so mad with that thing, I could —I could——

FRED. Maybe I ought to get me a square jug. Then it wouldn't roll.

(*He laughs, picks up his jug, and is about to take a drink, but* NELLY'S *cold stare dissuades him.* NELLY *comes to C.,*

with everyone watching her. CHARLIE *approaches her with some curiosity, but* NELLY'S *look causes him to retreat.*)

NELLY. This communication, I'll have you all know, is from my fiancé.

(*She opens the letter and reads with increasing amazement and grief.*)

"Dear Nelly." . . . *Dear* Nelly? I thought I was *dearest* Nelly. "I've got me a first-rate position down here in New Orleans. I am making four dollars a week."

FRED. Four dollars a week! Did you hear that, Zip?

(ZIP *listens with rapt attention.*)

CHARLIE. He's goin' to be a rich man, Nell. Make you a fine husband.

ABE. (*Measuring flour.*) That's a powerful lot of money these days.

NELLY. (*Reading.*) "Fannybelle sure thinks I look handsome in my new store suit with blue stripes." . . . Fannybelle?

(NELLY *is puzzled.* CHARLIE *comes closer with marked interest.*)

"Fannybelle thinks we ought to have a big church weddin', me bein' such an important man here in town. I reckon that's what we'll be doin' 'fore long, and I'm goin' to bring my beautiful bride up to New Salem one of these days." (NELLY *has grown tearfully angry.*) "We've been havin' a lot of rain lately in New Orleans. Your friend, Slim." Your friend! That's a cold word. (*Tearing the letter.*) Slim Judkins, I hate you, I hate you, I hate you! (*She stamps her foot.*) I've always hated you!

(*She covers her face with her hands.*)

CAROLINE. (*Trying to comfort her.*) Nell, I told you Slim wasn't the kind of man a girl could rely on.

(CHARLIE *looks at* ABE; ABE *nods.* FRED *starts his "Gentle Annie."*)

Come, dear, we'd better go home now.

NELLY. No! I don't want to go home!

(*She wipes away her tears and turns to* CHARLIE, *speaking sweetly.*)

Charlie! You wouldn't treat a nice girl that way, would you?

CHARLIE. (*Whittling rapidly, slightly embarrassed.*) No. . . . I reckon . . . I reckon not, Miss Nelly . . . Nelly.

NELLY. (*Crossing to him.*) You're so kind-hearted . . . (*touching his arm*) . . . and so big and strong.

ABE. (*Clearing his throat.*) Miss Caroline, I believe we'd better be tendin' to these groceries of yours.

CAROLINE. (*Turning back to the counter to arrange the groceries in her basket.*) Yes, Abe, I think *so.*

NELLY. What's that you've been carving, Charlie?

CHARLIE. It's a wooden soldier. I was carvin' it jest for you, Nell.

(*He hands it to her with some embarrassment, then looks off R. indifferently, the thumb of his left hand stuck into his overall shoulder strap.*)

NELLY. Oh, I think it's a lovely little soldier.

(*She fondles it, and the two appear absorbed in each other's company.* ABE *is sitting on the counter, figuring the grocery bill.*)

ZIP. Abe, will you do something for me?

ABE. Certainly, Zip. What is it?

ZIP. Will you stand up, straight and tall, and look out the door there as if you seen an angel a-comin' down the road?

FRED. He's at it again, folks. Watch yourself, Zip.

(*He takes a drink from his cider jug.*)

ABE. (*Rising slowly.*) I'm glad to oblige you, Zip; but I don't exactly know how to regard an angel strolling down a New Salem road. . . . By heaven, there's one comin' right now!

ZIP. (*Frightened.*) There is?

FRED. Abe Lincoln, I'm gettin' outta here.

(*He clutches his jug and rises, but does not know which way to go.*)

CAROLINE. What on earth do you see, Abe? Why, it's Old Mose!

ABE. An angel with a dusky countenance.

(OLD MOSE *enters L., carrying a burlap sack over his shoulder. He removes his hat with his left hand, clutching it to his chest.*)

NELLY. (*Seeing* MOSE.) Aren't you supposed to be home helping Aunt Hatty?

MOSE. I hope you'll excuse me, Miss Car'line and Miss Nelly, 'cause I done started de fire and filled de wood box and swept de flo'. And I's goin' right back. But fust kin I see Marse Abe 'bout somethin' I got fer him in this here sack?

CAROLINE. You just go right ahead, Mose.

MOSE. Thank you, ma'am.

(*He lays his hat on the floor and places the sack at C., in front of the counter, then kneels down beside it.*)

ABE. You have a kind heart, Miss Caroline.

FRED. But Charlie thinks Nelly is prettier, don't you, Charlie?

CHARLIE. You jest cut out that kind o' talk, Fred!

NELLY. Now, boys, you really mustn't quarrel over poor little me!

(*She smiles sweetly at* CHARLIE, *and takes his hand. Holding hands, they watch* OLD MOSE.)

MOSE. (*Removing an old shirt from the sack.*) Old Mr. Mathison give me all these here clo's; but I ain't got no use for dem, Marse Abe.

CAROLINE. For goodness' sake, Mose, you don't suppose Mr. Lincoln is going to wear that, do you?

MOSE. No ma'am. 'Deed I don't. But I thought Marse Abe would like to help de po' folks in the village; and they'd be too proud, bein' white folks, to take nothin' from an old darkey like me.

(*He lays the shirt and overalls on the counter.*)

ABE. That was a very generous thing to do, Mose. I know these will be needed by somebody in New Salem. (*Holding up the overalls to look at them.*) When a man gets ragged and his knees and elbows begin comin' out, it isn't long before he thinks his soul is ragged too.

NELLY. (*As she sees* AUNT HATTY *approaching L.*) Oh, Aunt Hatty!

(*She tries to hide behind* CHARLIE *as* AUNT HATTY *enters L., pausing at the entrance to take in everything with a cold stare.*)

AUNT HATTY. I declare! Isn't it about time you young ladies returned with the items I sent you to purchase?

CAROLINE. We were just about to leave.

ABE. Good evening, Aunt Hatty.

AUNT HATTY. How do you do, Mr. Lincoln. I suppose my snuff has been overlooked as usual? A small box of snuff, Mr. Lincoln, a small box of snuff. (*As* ABE *turns to look for it.*) And while you are about it, you might look

into those unreliable books of yours and tell me what I owe you.

CAROLINE. Did you hear, Aunt Hatty, that Mr. Mathison passed away this afternoon?

AUNT HATTY. Oh, so he did, did he? Well, am I supposed to cry about it?

(ABE *puts the box of snuff on the counter and sits down to examine his books.*)
He's been a burden to us all. He had to die sometime. (*Looking at* MOSE.) Mose, get right up off that floor and go home where you belong!

MOSE. Yes, Miss Hatty, I's goin'. I's goin'.

(*But he is searching in the bottom of the sack.*)

AUNT HATTY. (*Lifting her skirts as she crosses to R.*) This floor! Abe Lincoln, why don't you get one of these good-for-nothings to sweep the mud out of your store? It certainly needs sweeping!

ABE. (*Glancing at the floor.*) What you see there before you, ma'am, is good American soil; and, as any good American will tell you, it's the best soil in the world. I'm proud to say we seem to have quite a good share of it right here among ourselves.

(*He returns to his examination of the books.*)

FRED. Ha! You tell her, Abe!

AUNT HATTY. Nonsense! Fiddlesticks! American soil! Humbug! I don't see anyone here trying to make himself worthy of walking upon it. As a matter of fact, I doubt if anyone in this store, including you, Abe Lincoln, will ever amount to anything in the world! (*Approaching* NELLY.) What's that you have in your hand?

NELLY. It's a wooden soldier. Charlie carved it just for me.

AUNT HATTY. A wooden soldier! Well, I could hardly expect anything else to come out of a wooden head!

(*She glares for a moment at* CHARLIE, *who cowers, then turns L. to see* MOSE *pulling an American flag from the sack.*) Good heavens! What's that?

ABE. I believe that's an exact copy of the American flag, Miss Hatty. Your flag . . . our flag. . . .

MOSE. Mr. Mathison give me this here, too. He said he wouldn't have no need for it where he was goin'.

(MOSE *drapes the flag over the counter, one hand resting upon it.* FRED *begins to play "America."* ABE *begins to talk,* CAROLINE *sits down to listen with rapt attention.* ZIP *watches* ABE'S *face closely. The others stand motionless.*)

ABE. Maybe he won't, Mose; and maybe he will.

MOSE. Yes, suh.

ABE. A lot of folks don't seem to have any need for their flag here below; but the time is coming, Mose, and it isn't far off, when this flag will have need of us all. (*He looks down at the flag, then continues.*) A time is coming when good-for-nothing loafers like ourselves, who now sit idly in a little country store, will rally to the call of trumpets sounding a battle cry down city streets and through the green aisles of waving corn. There is already strife in our land. Now it is only the distant rumble of drums, a cry of the wind in the pines when a storm is rising over the hills. (*Pointing to the floor.*) This is the soil of America. (*Taking the flag in his hands.*) And this is the flag of our country. (*Standing straight.*) Men who live by this soil will die for this flag. They will die to defend the right as God gives them to see

the right; they will die to preserve the sublime proposition that all men are created equal; they will die so that this nation under God, this government of the people, by the people, and for the people will never perish from the earth.

(*He looks down at the flag.* FRED *stops playing.*)

MOSE. Amen, Marse Abe! Amen!

ZIP. (*After a pause.*) I wasn't dreamin'! It wasn't a dream! (*Rising.*) It was a vision! Abe Lincoln was the man I saw! Abe Lincoln was the man I saw in glory treadin' the wide places of the world with his head among the stars!

(*All stand motionless, as the curtain slowly falls.*)

THE END

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